

Translation into English of the scenario (by Kubota Mantarô) of Nagai Kafû's novel
Yume no Onna (1903)

A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for graduation *with research distinction* in Japanese in the undergraduate colleges of The Ohio State University

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June 2007

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Literatures

Yume no Onna

(Original work by Nagai Kafû)

Characters

Onami: Employee at a certain brothel in Susaki (known there as Kaede)

Otabe Hanzô: Owner of a pharmacy and one of Kaede's regular customers

Osawa: An old woman who had served Onami before

Omatsu: Aid to geisha

Kamigô Rihei: A speculator

Kaede II

Otsune: A maid

Additionally, the porter, the waiter at the dining hall, geisha, maids at the machi-ai, geisha aids at a certain brothel, servants, and various others.

Act 1

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The setting is the former Shinbashi Railway Station where Shiodome Station now stands. ...The location is a part of the large upstairs dining hall.

It is around the thirty-fifth or sixth year of the Meiji Era (1902, 1903). It is a cloudy afternoon in early December.

...Onami, leading Osawa, comes up from downstairs. Following Onami who has just gotten off the train, a porter carries her duffel bag and various other luggage.

Coming up into the dining room, Onami looks around the area somewhat shyly. Coming to a place she hardly knows makes her nervous. ...However, happily there are no customers at the moment. All tables are vacant.

...Onami, relieved, chooses a table and approaches it.

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...The porter puts the luggage down.

Onami: Thank you... (She takes out her purse from inside her kimono sash and pays the porter his wages.)

¹ Page numbers refer to the original Japanese stage scenario in the Kubota Mantarô Zenshû: Volume 9, pages 115-150.

Porter: *(Taking off his hat, he courteously bows)* What an unfortunate time for this weather to start...

Onami: Oh, rain?...

Porter: No, it's snowing.

Onami: Snow? *(She looks outside the window)* Oh, you're right. ...It looks like it's going to stick...

Porter: Yes, it's coming down hard right from the start...

Onami: So it seems.

Porter: Thank you very much. *(He bows again and exits downstairs.)*

An interval passes.

Onami: Granny...

Osawa: Madam...

...At almost the same time, their words come out involuntarily. ...Then, taking a good look at each other, the two are silent for a while.

...The waiter comes and stands behind Onami.

Onami: *(Noticing him, she becomes disconcerted)* Oh, uh....well...we'd like something please, sweets or something...

Waiter: Yes, Maam.

Onami: Oh, and milk. ...You'll have some, right? Granny, a glass of milk?...

Osawa: Yes.

Onami: Well then, glasses of milk too...

Waiter: Very well Maam.

...The waiter leaves.

Onami: *(With a quick sigh of relief)* My, what ever brings you here?...no, so then after that?...my, sit down, right there... *(She seats herself)*

Osawa: Yes, thank you. *(They sit together)*

Onami: So, where should we start?...I hadn't expected this at all. ...But, you really haven't changed one bit...

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Osawa: Neither have you, Madam. ...You've become so elegant...I feel like this is a dream. *(She takes out a folded hand towel and gently dries her tears)*

Onami: I feel the same way. Here I am suddenly meeting you; someone I haven't seen in years. And to have met by chance in all the confusion of the train platform. That just doesn't happen. ...It's karma. It must have been a karmic bond.

Osawa: I too, when I heard you calling "Granny, isn't it you?" and looked back, I didn't immediately...

Onami: You didn't recognize me?

Osawa: I thought you must be the lady of some prominent family...I'm very sorry, staring at you... *(She laughs)*

...The waiter brings sponge cake and glasses of milk, sets each out on the table, and leaves immediately. ...However, as he starts to leave, he takes note of the worsening snow-fall outside the window.

An interval passes.

Onami: But, even so, it's mysterious. *(She takes up her glass, about to drink, then quickly puts it back down)*

Osawa: Yes? *(Pausing with her glass in hand, she looks at Onami)*

Onami: It was five years ago...wasn't it? ...That we parted in tears?

Osawa: That's correct. It was five years ago.

Onami: Wouldn't you know? It was here at this very station. ...My master, my sole means of support, died and, at a loss with my girl of less than six months, I didn't know what to do or where to turn. I sent a letter back home and my parents told me not to be discouraged, but to return home to them. ...I gave up the house, entrusted my baby to you, and on that cold morning in the New Year, just as the pine decorations had been taken down, there I was alone and dejected. You saw me off on the first train in the morning from this station.

Osawa: I too remember it well. That was the time. ...The time when we left the house in Tsukiji and headed here by rickshaw. Dawn had just broken, and here and there the lights of the night still glowed. ...The wind was cold, and frost covered the ground turning it white...how forlorn you must have felt.

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Onami: So what do you think? This time, it's just the reverse: I've come back from home and have just gotten off the train. ...And right off the bat, who do I meet? The person I parted from, right here, five years ago. ...Well, Granny, isn't it mysterious? Don't you agree?

Osawa: It feels like destiny, somehow.

Onami: Ah yes, you're right, destiny...*(She speaks half as if to herself, and then says more formally)* That's right, it's destiny. ...I just said it was because of a bond we share, but it's more than a bond. It's more deeply rooted—like destiny. It's exactly as you say. ...But, the thought of it is rather frightening.

Osawa: Oh my, you needn't take me so seriously...*(She laughs)*

Onami: But no, it does worry me. ...After all, think like that and I feel like my whole life until now was nothing but destiny.

Osawa: ...*(Not knowing how to respond, she picks up her glass of milk and sips it)*

The waiter comes to check the flame of the stove and adds coal. ...Just then, two or three customers who appear to have gotten off of a train that just arrived come up the stairs. They are speaking in loud voices. The waiter greets them. The customers cut across the room and disappear into the back with the waiter.

An interval passes.

Onami: *(Suddenly, in a bold manner)* Granny, I'd like to ask something. ...There's something I'd like to ask. ...May I?

Osawa: What would you like to know? *(Surprised by the excitement in Onami's voice, she raises her head without thinking)*

Onami: About the girl.

Osawa: *(Reflexively)* About the girl?

Onami: If I had taken her home with me in spite of not even knowing what would happen to me from then on, she'd only have become a hindrance. I froze my heart and

parted from her...leaving her with you, and having you find a place that would take her for me...

Osawa: If you mean your daughter, Otane...

Onami: Is she well? ...Has she been properly raised safe and sound? Your former master named, his name was...oh, right, Anematsu-san...an office worker who had a splendid mansion in Kôjimachi...

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Osawa: ...*(She silently hangs her head in shame)*

Onami: *(Not noticing Osawa's appearance)* You sent a letter home to me writing how kind and gentle both the husband and the wife are, right? ...I read that letter and I cried the whole night. ...And while thinking it had turned out well and that I might find some peace of mind, I thought about how my girl and I were separated forever, unable to meet again during our lifetimes, and I was so sad. ...I who had depended on others from early on and suffered, whatever I said, was still only about eighteen, equivalent to a young girl ignorant to the ways of the world...*(She laughs, but at the same time, she takes out a handkerchief (silk) and dries her tears)*

Osawa: ...*(Silent)*

Onami: *(She quickly regroups)* So, even now do you sometimes go and see how she is for me?

Osawa: At first I was worried too, so I inquired now and then, but whenever I visited, she was being treated with great care as if she was their own daughter, so I was relieved and, not wanting to disturb even my old master, I hadn't gone again in these past three years. This summer, though, it unexpectedly came to mind and, since it had been a while since my last visit, I went to give my regards to the family...

Onami: You were able to see her, right?

Osawa: Yes.

Onami: I'm sure she's gotten bigger, right?

Osawa: Well, she's turned five already...

Onami: She must be very cute, right? ...Even once, I'd like to see her. ...I wonder, can't I see even a glimpse of her?

Osawa: *(Silent, she looks intently upon Onami. ...However, suddenly, appearing as if unable to endure it any longer, she breaks out into tears)*

Onami: *(Surprised)* My, what's wrong, what is it?

Osawa: I've done an unforgivable thing. ...I'm so very sorry. *(She continues to cry)*

Onami: *(She suddenly turns pale)* Something's happened to her, hasn't it? ...she's become very sick or something, hasn't she?

Osawa: No, her health is still fine. ...Her body is well.

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Onami: Then what is it? ...What are you saying happened?

Osawa: It's that Mr. Anematsu's wife treats her very harshly.

Onami: Why? ...After all, that doesn't make any sense. What did you say just now? ...That she was being treated with great care as if she was their own daughter...

Osawa: At first that was the case. ...No, even afterwards it was always like that. It was last spring that Mr. Anematsu's wife, who had given up thinking it was futile, unexpectedly became pregnant with a boy. ...Since then, the madam has turned cold toward Otane and, as if an enemy, cruelly began treating her in an inexcusable manner. ...She's a very level-headed person and, even when wrong, I can't think she would be the type of person to discriminate like that, however...

Onami: ...*(Overcome with surprise, she is speechless)*

Osawa: When I had visited after a long absence, the madam was away at her parents' or something, however I met with Mr. Anematsu and it was then that he told me of the troubles. ...Saying that as his wife's feelings toward the girl had changed so much, he felt sorry for the innocent girl's future. He went on to say that that was all the more reason why he wanted to return the girl to his former parents with an allowance of some sort for her upbringing before it was too late.

Onami: ...*(Silent)*

Osawa: I was also at a loss. ...I had no idea how to proceed, so at any rate, I thought I would ask for advice. I came back home wanting to discuss the situation, however only my children were there and, while they were concerned for me, they couldn't provide any wisdom to me. Anyhow, I thought I should let you know and so I sent a letter to your hometown, Okazaki. After I sent it off,

through some error, the envelope came back saying there was no such person at the address.

Onami: I'm sorry about that. ...No, in my home town as well, after that there were various complications and we ended up moving towards the outskirts of Okazaki...

Osawa: Well that explains it. When my letter came back with that note, I didn't know you had moved, so I was quite shocked. ...I thought, Heavens, what on earth...what's happened to you!

Onami: Facing you and speaking like this, I can't think five years have actually passed, but in these five years, my circumstances have changed completely. ...The hardships that I would face in those five years. ...To you who only knows the me from the time when I was being cared for by my late master, I don't think you could even imagine it.

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Osawa: But now, you're doing very well. That you've become such a splendid person... I'm so happy to see...(She dries her tears)

Onami: I haven't become such a person at all. (*Lonely, partly speaking as if ridiculing the very idea*)

Osawa: (*Not listening to Onami's comment*) So, where is it that you reside now, madam?

Onami: I've always been in Tokyo...

Osawa: That I understand, but where in Tokyo?

Onami: Around Fukagawa.

Osawa: Fukugawa? ...Where exactly in Fukugawa?

Onami: (*Changing the subject*) More importantly, where do you live now, Granny?

Osawa: Me? I now live in Atagoshita in Shiba. I'm proving to be a burden living with my son, who is back from the military a year. ...Happily, I now have a daughter-in-law as well as a grandchild, and although we live in less than elegant circumstances, my son and daughter-in-law treat me very kindly...

Onami: That's really great. ...You're very lucky...(She becomes quiet)

Osawa: (*Quickly changing the subject back*) That's true, but anyways, what is it that should be done, Madam? About Otane...

Onami: (*Vividly displaying rebellious spirit*) She can't stay at that house anymore. ...Even without having been told so before, I can't very well just leave her... We really can't take her back soon enough!

Osawa: That you should say so, I'll go talk to the family as early as tomorrow. (*And then seeming anxious*) However, madam?

Onami: Yes?

Osawa: What if Otane were to become known to the household you now keep?

Onami: (*Laughing as if tossing out Osawa's concern*) Granny, I still haven't set up a household like that of a man and wife.

Osawa: (*As if doubting her ears*) I beg your pardon?

Onami: All right! Even if I don't have a household and, due to certain circumstances, am not able to keep her by me, I'm her real mother after all. ...No matter what happens, I'll take her back at least. ...Don't worry about such things. I'm twenty years old now and I can't keep on imposing on you like I have until now...

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Osawa: Don't be silly. If it's for your sake, madam, I'll resume my situation under you and be of service in any way that I might. ...Actually, today I went to Kawasaki to pay my respects to the Buddha as I do every month, and among the various things I asked for, I included you, asking him to insure your safety and well being...

Onami: Thank you. (*Hardly able to get the words out of her mouth, she looks away*)

Osawa: So, once I've spoken with the family, should I come inform you immediately? Or...

Onami: I'll send someone your way. ...Please discuss the matter with that person. That person will probably also tell you about the life I lead now... You say your son's home in Atagoshita, Shiba? What's the address?

Osawa: I have his business card right here. (*She pulls out the business card from her purse and hands it over*)

Onami: (*Taking it, she inserts it inside her kimono sash*)

Osawa: Well then madam, until we meet again...*(She stands)*

Onami: *(Taking out her watch)* Oh, it's already four...I'm sorry to have kept you so long.

Osawa: Not at all. I was able to meet you, so. ...I have to go give my thanks to the Buddha at once...

Onami: Oh waiter...*(she calls out)*

...*The waiter comes.*

Onami: How much is it?

Waiter: Thank you very much. *(He takes out the check from his pocket and hands it over)*

Onami: *(She pays)* It seems the snow's really falling hard now.

Waiter: Yes.

Onami: I wonder if you could call rickshaws for me.

Waiter: Where to?

Onami: One to Shiba, one to Fukagawa...

Osawa: Oh madam, really I'm...

Onami: No, no. There's no reason to hold back. ...Waiter, two please.

Waiter: Please wait a moment...

The waiter goes downstairs. ...During this time, Onami takes out a tissue and wraps up both her and Osawa's untouched shares of sponge cake and places them in front of Osawa.

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Onami: Take them to your grandchild...

Osawa: Oh my, thank you so much. I'll do that. *(She humbly accepts them and puts them into her purse)*

...*The waiter, raincoat wet with snow, comes back upstairs leading two rickshaw men.*

Waiter: I'm sorry to have kept you waiting...

Onami: Thank you.

One of the rickshaw men: Is this all the luggage?

Onami: Yes, just mine, just those...

...The rickshaw men divide up Onami's luggage and carry them downstairs at once. Onami and Osawa follow afterwards. At that moment, a group of three customers with the air of merchants come up from downstairs and unexpectedly come upon Onami. ...One among them, knowing her identity, unthinkingly stops in his tracks. Sensing this and startled, Onami also stops in her tracks. ...Both realize their connection...

A mere instant passes.

...With a nonchalant air, Onami quickly avoids the man and urges Osawa on down the stairs. The expression on her face suggests that nothing at all has happened.

An interval passes.

Customer 1: (Watching Onami go off) Damn, who does she think she's fooling?
(Intentionally speaking so that the others will hear, he laughs)

Customer 2: What's that?

Customer 1: That woman! The one who just left.

Customer 3: You know her? ...She looks like a married woman.

Customer 1: She does indeed. She looks like a fine upstanding lady, even if you put her alongside the shabbiest sort of man. (Making innuendo)

...The three men choose a suitable table and set themselves down. ...The waiter comes.

Customer 1: Hey waiter, get me a hot bottle of sake. And something to nibble on...(Ordering)

Waiter: Yes sir. (Leaves)

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An interval passes.

Customer 3: Excuse me for saying so, but she's a knock-out. One look and I felt a chill run down my spine!

Customer 1: In that case, no need to hesitate then! You should go for her! She's up for sale! *(Laughs)*

Customer 3: What was that?

Customer 1: You've heard of Susaki, haven't you—the pleasure district in Fukugawa? She's the one called “Kaede” of the Oh-Hachiman House, your fair lady...

Customer 3: Her? *(Stands without thinking)*

...The waiter brings a large bottle of beer. ...He opens the bottle promptly, pours it into the three men's glasses, and leaves.

Customer 2: Hey...(to Customer 1) Is that really true?

Customer 1: Yes it's true, and that's why she was so spooked when she saw me. Didn't you notice?

Customer 2: *(Not answering)* Is that so? You mean that woman is the Susaki woman that Otabe from Ningyô-chô is so busy visiting?

Customer 1: You're well informed, pal. That's right. That renowned straight-laced guy got caught by that woman, and all at once became as spineless and quivering as a sea cucumber. ...This New Year's, we had our New Year's Party at “Kusatsu” in Kayaba-chô, right? After the party died down, some of us headed off to Susaki for our own special gathering. That was how it all got started, and I've never seen anything like it before in my life. Once he crossed the threshold of that house, Otabe was a goner...

Customer 2: I suppose that comes as no surprise. When it comes to that guy, aside from working behind the gloomy lattice work of the shop, ever since childhood, that man has had no greater skill than flipping the beads of an abacus, so it's not unreasonable that he'd fawn over a girl he could never get. It really makes you wonder what'll happen to him...

Customer 3: Oh it's all right. What difference does it make? ...Even I'd sell off a corner plot of land for that woman!

Customer 1: By the way, Otabe...(He starts to say) Hey, waiter, bring us more. ...(He picks up the empty bottle and shows it)

Waiter: Yes sir.

(Theatrical Blackout)

Act 2

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The setting is a large brothel in Susaki's red-light district. ...Hidden in part of the second floor of a tower-like multi-storied building is Kaede's room (Onami is called this special name here) and the corridor running outwards. ...The roughly ten tatami mat room, divided into six mat and three mat spaces, adorned with a six part Tosa School art print folding screen, the long outer robe with a brilliant embroidery hanging on a clothes rack, as well as the extravagance of the chest, the tea cabinet, the oblong brazier, and the dresser all naturally indicate the height of prosperity of a woman who has taken the honorific geisha title of "O-shoku".

...Several hours have passed since Act 1. It is after eight o'clock in the night, and the air of the place is filled with the silence that comes when snow begins to fall in earnest.

...When the stage brightens, the man rumored about in Act 1, Otabe Hanzô is visible. He has placed a small dining tray next to the kotatsu that he sits in. The kotatsu is covered with a Yuzen quilt, and he is quietly sipping from a sake cup. ...He looks comfortable at a glance, but in fact, he is not. His head droops as if weighed down by a terrible weight, and he casts an empty look like a man who has lost all support and heart.

An interval passes. The sound of waves can be heard.

...The shôji slides open. ...Omatsu, the maid, enters.

Omatsu: It's become quite an unusually heavy snowfall. ...Anyhow, it means the rickshaws aren't moving. *(As she speaks, she comes and sits next to Otabe. ...Planning on serving sake, she takes up the sake bottle from the table)* Oh my, you don't seem the least bit lively.

Otabe: ...*(Keeping his head down, he is silent)*

Omatsu: What's the matter?

Otabe: ...*(Silent)*

Omatsu: Are you feeling all right? ...You haven't gotten chilly due to the snow, have you? ...Yes, that's surely it.

Otabe: ...*(Silent)*

Omatsu: Oh this is just terrible, such a cold bottle. ...Let's replace it with a hot one.
(Standing, she moves toward the adjacent area)

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Otabe: *(Abruptly)* Where's Kaede? *(He lifts his head and speaks in an angry tone of voice. ...however, the poor fellow's words get caught in his throat)*

Omatsu: Well now, I told you, didn't I? I said she's fixing her hair.

Otabe: I couldn't care less about her hair! Tell her to come right now!

Omatsu: Now we can't very well do that. ...Saying such an unreasonable thing, why I feel sorry for Oiran. ...She's just returned from her hometown, hasn't she?

Otabe: ...*(Quiet)*

Omatsu: However, it can't be helped...you're wanting to see her. Because for ten whole days you haven't met...*(She laughs neither quite in banter nor in sarcasm. ...She sits in front of the brazier in the adjacent area and puts a new bottle of sake inside the copper boiler)*

An interval passes.

Otabe: Omatsu...

Omatsu: Yes? *(She turns towards Otabe)*

Otabe: For what possible reason did Kaede go back to her parents home in the country?

Omatsu: *(Curtly)* To visit her sick father...

Otabe: That's all it took for her to return to Okazaki?

Omatsu: That's as much as I know, at least. ...Perhaps...yes that's probably right, she may have also planned to take a little rest as well. ...After all, this past half-year, Oiran has worked without a break...

Otabe: Why is it that she has to work so much? ...Like that, there's absolutely no result from her having properly returned her debt and become self-supporting. Omatsu, because I've wanted to make it even a little easier for Kaede, I gave her whatever she wanted. ...Omatsu, you were also present so you should know all this...

Omatsu: Well that, I understand only too well; your great kindness. That's why Oiran feels so indebted. Thanks to you, she was able to become self-supporting. ...The

more grateful she feels, the more she feels compelled to work. ...And then, the more she works, the more she wants...no, I shouldn't call it "want". It's really her determination. ...it's some strange thing, but just like that, she makes herself work even harder. ...It can't be helped. Even if she's told she's behaving like a child...in the end, she's fundamentally an honest person...

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...During this time, Omatsu takes out the warmed sake bottle from the copper boiler and returns to her spot next to Otabe.

Omatsu: Now, please have a little hot sake. *(She passes the bottle to her other hand, ready to serve)*

Otabe: *...(Reluctantly, he raises his cup and is served, however, without drinking, he puts the cup down at once)*

Omatsu: My, what is the matter. ...This won't do at all. ...She'll be coming momentarily, Oiran...*(She laughs, somewhat out of pity)*

An interval passes.

Otabe: *(Suddenly)* Omatsu...

Omatsu: *(Flustered)* Yes?

Otabe: Isn't it that Kaede's fallen in love with another customer?

Omatsu: What? *(Surprised by the unforeseen question)*

Otabe: There's some lady's man, isn't there? ...If there is, just say it clearly. ...No, please tell me...

An interval passes.

Omatsu: There isn't anybody like that...

Otabe: *...(Silent)*

Omatsu: At least, there isn't anyone like that for our Oiran. ...Because I'm the person who knows everything about her, and I'm saying so. There's nothing more certain.

Otabe: *...(Quiet)*

Omatsu: And now especially, for Oiran it is unthinkable. ...With her sending money back home to her parents the way she does. ...She already has plenty to worry about.

Otabe: ...*(He hangs his head deeply once more)*

Omatsu: Oiran would truly get angry if she were to hear such false accusations. ...No, it would reduce her to tears.

An interval passes.

Otabe: I'm sorry. *(He raises his sake cup and offers it)* I've said some things I shouldn't have.

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Omatsu: *(Receiving the cup)* That's right. ...Let's try to put ourselves in her place just a little bit.

An interval passes.

Otabe: But, Omatsu...*(Indecisively starting to say)*

Omatsu: *(She pays no attention to his misgivings. She empties and returns the cup)* Now, guzzle down two or three cups of sake, will you? It'll surely cheer you up. *(She lifts the sake bottle)*

...At this time, a servant comes, opens the shôji slightly, and calls to Omatsu.

Servant: I'm very sorry.

Omatsu: Who is it? *(She looks back)* Oh, Shin...

Servant: If I may see you for a moment...

Omatsu: What is it? *(She stands and goes immediately, then listens to the servant whisper a few words)* What's this? Now of all times. And in this snow no less! All right, I'll answer, I'll answer and listen. ...Well now, it's not such a great concern after all. *(Deliberately speaking in a loud voice so that Otabe will overhear)*

...The young servant leaves.

Omatsu: *(Stands without returning to her former position)* I'm going to go answer a telephone call for a moment. ...I'll be right back. ...Oh, here comes Kaede. *(She says as if speaking to herself and exits to the corridor)*

An interval passes. The sound of waves can be heard.

...Otabe suddenly stands and approaches the window, violently opening its storm shutters. ...Just then, the trail of wind suddenly forces snow inside. ...Otabe, not disliking it, stays put and looks off into the darkness of the vast snowy night beyond the window.

An interval passes. The sound of waves can be heard.

...The shôji opens. ...Onami enters as Kaede, her hair done in the Kushimaki style, wearing a dressing gown and a haori coat over it.

Kaede: *(Looking at Otabe's back)* Oh my, what are you doing over there in the cold?...

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Otabe: *...(He looks back silently. ...However, his gaze almost immediately to where it was before)*

Kaede: What ever are you thinking?...you'll catch a cold that way. *(She comes and sits where Omatsu had been until now)*

...Otabe quietly closes the window (avoiding the violent manner of earlier), and returns to his seat.

Kaede: Welcome. *(One hand resting downward, she bows and gracefully greets him)*

Otabe: *...(Silent)*

An interval passes. ...Kaede, as if cautiously watching Otabe, also falls silent. The sound of waves can be heard.

Otabe: Kaede...*(Speaking abruptly)*

Kaede: *(Indifferently)* Yes.

Otabe: Tell me. ...Tell me once and for all.

Kaede: Tell you what exactly?

Otabe: "What"?

Kaede: Yes.

Otabe: You can feign ignorance and try to dodge my question as you always do, but for tonight at least, I won't fall for that.

Kaede: But, when you say such a thing out of the blue, I have really no idea how to answer.

Otabe: That's the answer. ...That's the answer I want to hear.

Kaede: As I said, what answer?

Otabe: Kaede, even after I've been this honest with you, you still don't get it?

Kaede: I know what you are trying to say. And because I do...*(She starts to continue, but stops in mid-sentence)* That's why I don't want to become further indebted to you.

Otabe: You don't want to become further indebted? What the hell does that mean?

Kaede: I'm thinking, Otabe-san, I'm thinking that I might lengthen my term of service here.

Otabe: Lengthen your term of service? ...wh..why? ...wh..why would you ever do such a foolish thing?...

Kaede: I , I'm so sorry Otabe-san. It's just that I need the money.

Otabe: So that means you've been deceiving me right from the beginning. ...This spring, when you told me you wanted to become an independent geisha, I said I would rather buy you your freedom. And what did you say? You said if I were to buy you your freedom, there would be endless expenses. After I paid back your debts to your boss, there would be various expenses for celebrations and gifts when a geisha's freedom is bought. You said using money in such a wasteful way was ridiculous. So instead you'd become self-supporting, and after one or two years of work, you'd quietly quit this line of work in such a way that wouldn't draw public notice. Then you'd come to me...Have you forgotten everything you said?

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Kaede: I remember it all. ...However, afterwards I realized all too clearly that, as a woman, I still couldn't have things the way I wanted them. ...So please resign yourself to the fact that you've gotten entrapped in a nightmare by a dreadful woman. As for me, I don't care what happens to me if I'm able to fulfill my obligation to you, but my father, my mother, and my siblings back home, as well as another poor soul *(Indirectly referring to Otane of which she had unexpectedly heard about in Act I)* would all end up on the streets.

Otabe: After all this time, how can you say such a shameless thing?! ...And you call yourself human? A flesh-and-blood human being?!

Kaede: No, I'm a brute, an ungrateful beast. ...And I'm prepared for whatever retribution will come for my sins in the future...

Otabe: (*Quickly yielding*) Kaede, don't say such hopeless things. ...If I've gone too far, I apologize. ...I apologize, so calm down. Please, Kaede. ...I'm begging you. ...I didn't say anything because I thought that sooner or later you'd figure it out from the way I looked and without my having to endlessly explain it all. Kaede, I let somebody take over the store in Ningyô-chô quite some time ago. And when the master of the main store in Kodenma-chô found out, he disowned me. ...On top of that, my damned wife ran out of patience and scurried off to her hometown with the children. ...That's why...

Kaede: ...(*Silent*)

Otabe: I've gone that far in making a public disgrace of myself all because I want to live my life with you, even if only for half a year, or a month, no matter how disgraceful I might feel. My property, my honor, others' trust in me, I've lost them all. ...but, if you would say only one thing: that you'd be my wife...

Kaede: ...(*Silent*)

Otabe: Kaede, please, don't leave me.

Kaede: ...(*Silent*)

Otabe: Nobody—not even my friends—will give me the time of day. I'm all alone. At the very least, you've got to be nice to me and make me feel better.

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Kaede: ...(*Silent*)

An interval passes.

Otabe: (*Suddenly, enraged*) Say something, say something!

Kaede: ...(*Silent*)

Otabe: Don't just sit there quietly, say something! ...Say something! (*Grasping Kaede's hand, he pulls it towards him*)

... Since earlier, Omatsu has been concerned about Kaede and is secretly standing outside. She calls out through the shôji.

Omatsu: Oiran, if I may see you for a moment...

Kaede: Yes. *(She silently frees her hand, stands, and begins to leave)*

...Just then, Otabe jumps to his feet and chases her, grabbing the hair at the neck and pulling her down to the floor.

Otabe: You heartless whore!...*(He wildly pummels her with his fists)*

Having heard Kaede's cry, Omatsu dashes into the room.

Omatsu: Now Otabe-san, you, such a violent...*(Forcing her way between Otabe and Kaede)*

...The three struggle, push, and shove. ...Holding back Otabe, Omatsu allows for Kaede's escape. ...Aided by the three or four other geisha and servants who, aware of the uproar, had gathered in the corridor, Kaede leaves.

An interval passes.

Omatsu: I apologize. You must forgive her. ...Did Oiran say something rude? ...I assure you, I'll give her a good talking-to later on. Even if she's rather clever, she's still young when all is said and done...*(She consoles him)*

...Otabe, as if completely exhausted by the furious dispute, lets his shoulders go limp and closes his eyes.

Otabe: *(Suddenly, he raises his head)* Omatsu, may I have a cup of hot water?

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Omatsu: Hot water? ...Of course...

...She starts towards the adjacent room. ...Keeping an eye on her, Otabe pulls out a paper billfold from inside his kimono, and secretly takes out a pack of a powdered substance.

Omatsu: Here's your hot water. ...It may be a little tepid.

Otabe: Thank you. *(He takes the cup and drinks his water along with the substance)*

Omatsu: What kind of medicine is that?

Otabe: Oh, this? ...It's...*(He starts to speak. His face has already turned pale. He loses his balance, his feet giving way beneath him)*

Omatsu: *(Startled)* Otabe-san, Otabe-san. ...What's wrong? ...What's wrong?
...You...*(She holds him up in her arms. ...However, he's already died.*
...Horried, she springs out into the corridor) Somebody come! ...It's an
emergency, somebody come! ...Call a doctor! Quick, call a doctor!...

...Omatsu strains her voice as best she can.

(Curtain Descends)

Act 3

(P132)

The setting is the garden to the rear of a house in the pleasure district that looks out onto the sea (Tôkyô Bay). The grass embankment, acting as a breakwater, reveals one of its vast sides and extends far into the distance. There is a bench to sit on, thickets of grass, a street light, and so forth. Furthermore, at one part of the breakwater, there is a path leading to a pier granting access onto the water.

...It is three months later. The sky is alternately sunny and cloudy. It is already past four o'clock.

...Osawa from Act 1 is sitting on the bench, holding Otane on her knee. After having retrieved her as promised to Onami, she is herself looking after the girl for the time being. ... Otane sleeps peacefully in Osawa's arms.

An interval passes.

...Kaede, while quarrelling with Omatsu about something, appears over the breakwater.

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Kaede: *(In contrast to Act 2, she has become remarkably thin and now casts a somehow dark, withered shadow)* Fine, fine, if you're going to say such things, that's fine!
I don't listen to a thing you say anymore anyway...

Omatsu: Yes, yes, that's excellent! If you're not going to listen, then it's perfectly fine
because I'll never meddle with your life again!

Kaede: What are you after all? My friend? Or my enemy? What exactly is so amusing about anticipating what I'd dislike and then doing it to torment me?

Omatsu: Isn't it all because I'm considering your welfare? ...Isn't it all because I want to restore you to the former Kaede-Oiran once more?

Kaede: Mind your own business! ...Anyway, I'm a jinxed woman. ...A horrific and dreadful woman...Even the papers write about me as a "poisonous woman"...

Omatsu: And that's why...why I want to...

Kaede: Never mind! When I get desperate enough, I'll change geisha houses and find work somewhere else...(She comes down from the breakwater)

Omatsu: Oiran, is that really what you want to do?...

Kaede: Of course, it's fine with me.

...Omatsu leaves in a fury.

An interval passes.

Kaede: I'm so sorry Granny. I didn't mean to make you wait so long...(She approaches the bench Osawa is sitting)

Osawa: Oh, might you have pressing matters to attend to, or...

Kaede: No, the person who works for me speaks such nonsense that I was scolding her just now. ...It goes on all the time; her shouting like that. (Laughing) Oh, did she fall asleep?

Osawa: She was awake until now, however...

Kaede: My, she looks so innocent, sleeping so soundly...(She peeks down at her face) Hasn't she put on a little weight since the last time you were kind enough to bring her to see me?

Osawa: Yes she has. ...And it's not only that she's gained weight, she's becoming more lively with each passing day. I'm free to say it now, but when I went to Kôjimachi last year to take her back, I asked myself if I should really take this on...was it really a good idea for me to take charge of her? ...And could I really succeed in looking after her? I wasn't the only one asking such questions. My son and daughter-in-law were as well...

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Kaede: You asked yourself all those questions, did you?

Osawa: But if I had delayed and waited two or three days in going to Kôjimachi, who knows what might have happened...

Kaede: Really? *(Unintentionally, her eyes widen in surprise)*

Osawa: I put her on my back, and as soon as I got out the door, I took her to see a doctor right away. ...He too was shocked. He said it looked as if she was completely malnourished...

Kaede: No matter how much she may hate a step-child, surely a mother wouldn't stint on feeding a child...

Osawa: No, madam, they weren't giving her three meals a day at all...

Kaede: They didn't let her eat all?

Osawa: I didn't think I would say that much, but at this rate, she's fine. There is no cause for worry. *(Laughing, she looks at her face)*

Kaede: So there are monstrous people like that in this world...

Osawa: Long ago, when I worked for her, she wasn't that type of person, but...

Kaede: Human beings change. One small mistake and...*(She lowers her gaze as if thinking silently of herself...she gets her self under control)* Can I hold her for a bit?...*(She reaches out)*

Osawa: Is it all right? *(Looking about)*

Kaede: It's fine. I don't care who sees me...*(She takes Otane from Osawa and holds her in her arms. ...Just then, Otane awakens and begins to fret)* Oh, there, there. ...There, there, there, don't cry. Your mother has you in her arms...*(She hurriedly rocks her)*

...Otane falls asleep again.

An interval passes.

Kaede: *(Intently looking down on her)* Granny...

Osawa: Yes.

Kaede: If times hadn't changed, I could always be with her like this. ...Isn't that right?
(As if unintentionally appealing to Osawa)

Osawa: Madam, you shouldn't say that.

Kaede: Why?

Osawa: Everything's still ahead of you, isn't it? ...Your entire life. ...And how luck will begin to smile on you in the times ahead. I'm waiting and very much looking forward to it. ...Above all else, you are still young, madam, are you not?...

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Kaede: That's true. ...I'm still young. I must think about things in that way. ...From now on, there's no reason for me to go on torturing myself.

Osawa: Madam, I've said this before, but haven't you suffered and come this far all for the sake of your family, and for your parents? You will surely be rewarded for your hardships someday. You truly will.

Kaede: Thank you. ...I understand. ...It's exactly as you say. You really do say the most helpful things, Granny...*(She is elated)*

...At this time, a man's voice calling "Kaede-san, Kaede-san" is heard. ...Kaede doesn't pay it much mind, however Osawa takes it as her cue to rise from the bench.

Osawa: The sky has suddenly gotten strangely overcast. I should probably take my leave...

Kaede: Oh? But can you manage? How are you going to take her?

Osawa: Oh, thank you for your concern, but I can carry her on my back...*(She turns her back towards Kaede)*

Kaede: Are you going to be all right?

Osawa: I'll be fine. I've brought a baby sling...

...Osawa then takes up Otane on her back using the sling. ...Kaede helps as she can. ...Fortunately, Otane does not wake.

Osawa: Well then madam, please excuse me for having taken up your time.

Kaede: No, it's me who should apologize. You came all this way for me, but I'm always in a bustle and wasn't even able to offer you tea...

Osawa: To the contrary. I always worry if it's not an imposition because I come looking so shabby in appearance...

Kaede: Heavens, don't be silly. Aren't I always the one asking you to come visit me? There's absolutely no need to feel reluctant over such a thing. Everybody here at work already knows about the child...*(She says as she looks about the area)* Well then, here is the usual amount. *(From between her kimono sash, she pulls out a sum of money wrapped in paper. It is for Otane's upbringing)* This month, I really wanted to manage more, but I fear it didn't work out that way...

Osawa: All I do is trouble you...

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Kaede: That's ridiculous. ...You're taking care of her for me, aren't you? ...I should be the one apologizing to you for not being able to provide more. But, more than anything, I think, you're being great to look after her. ...No, even if you're all right with it, I can't help feeling I'm causing trouble for your son and daughter-in-law. ...Despite their having a small child of their own at home, I do this...

Osawa: Even if you call her small, she's already seven. She thinks of Otane as a younger sister and they play very well together every day.

Kaede: Thank you for saying so...

...A woman's voice calls out "Kaede-san, Kaede-san". ...Paying her no mind, Kaede sees Osawa off.

An interval passes. ...Omatsu comes out onto the breakwater.

Omatsu: Kaede-san... Kaede-san...*(She calls and looks about the area)* Where could she have gone? ...What am I going to do with her? *(She starts down the breakwater)*

...Kaede returns. ...Her ill humor from earlier has completely changed. She now has a cheerful demeanor.

Omatsu: Oiran, where were you? *(She is still possessed by the ill humor from before)* Didn't you hear me calling you just now?

Kaede: I heard. ...but I was just seeing off a visitor out back. ...Was there something?...

Omatsu: A customer has come.

Kaede: Oh my, already?...

Omatsu: Please come immediately.

...Kaede calls out to Omatsu who has started off.

Kaede: Omatsu...

Omatsu: What is it?

Kaede: Come here for a second...

Omatsu: *...(She doesn't answer)*

Kaede: Come here for a moment...

Omatsu: *...(Pouting, she prolongs her silence. ...But, charmed by Kaede's cheerful and gentle expression, and the earlier excitement having subsided, she reluctantly walks down the embankment)*

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...Omatsu adopts a chilly air in facing Kaede.

Kaede: *(Immediately)* Omatsu, please forgive me. *(She takes Omatsu's hand)*

Omatsu: ...? *(Silence. She is taken aback by Kaede's sudden apology. She looks intently at Kaede)*

Kaede: *(Starting in the midst of Omatsu's silence)* I was wrong, I said too much. ...I'm so sorry.

Omatsu: *...(Silent)*

Kaede: Since the incident with Mr. Otabe, many rumors were started about me, my customers left me in a fury, my rank dropped, my earnings diminished, and it gradually became impossible to send money back home. ...Quite unintentionally, I became irritated, so I drank sake I ought not to and I took out my frustration on the people at work, who were neither guilty of anything nor merited any punishment. ...And then I caused you all sorts of trouble. ...But still, I...

Omatsu: *(Scarcely opening her mouth)* No, Oiran, I was the one who went too far. ...Even today, I said some things that didn't need to be said, and afterwards... now I think I was wrong to say them. ...I apologize, I'm very sorry. ...I said them because I was mortified that you were losing customers to other girls in the house like Hanazato-san and Mitsuôgi-san, and that your status in rankings at the

house was slipping. ...Because I very much want to see Kaede Oiran at the height of her prosperity once more. ...But despite that, you always only talked about resting and of business to take care of...

Kaede: From now on I'll mend my ways and go back to work. I'll make money. ...I'll never sulk and feel sorry for myself again. ...I'm still young. I'm hardly at the end of my life.

Omatsu: My, what happened, Oiran? How come you're saying such things all of a sudden?

Kaede: Somebody reminded me.

Omatsu: Who?

Kaede: It was Granny. She's kind and sweet and she thinks and worries for me as if I were her own daughter. She's been with me since I was eighteen.

...At this time, a maid from the brothel, Otsune, comes out searching for Omatsu.

Otsune: What's wrong, Omatsu? ...Oh, Oiran, you're also here?

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Omatsu: I apologize. We'll be there right away...

Otsune: Please hurry. The customer is growing impatient...

Kaede: Will this be the first time we meet?

Otsune: No, he came two nights ago, and now he's come back to see you again...

Kaede: Oh, the person from Komeyamachi?

Otsune: Yes, that's him. That's why I say please hurry...

Kaede: Let's go. ...Omatsu, I'm going to work! ...No more idling away!

...She starts off first. Otsune and Omatsu follow afterwards. The street light softly comes on.

(Theatrical Blackout)

Act 4

(P138)

Kaede's room. (The same as in Act 2)

...Kamigô Rihei, (He has passed fifty, however his stout, sturdy frame boasts a spirit even a young man can not match. He has sharp eyes and a square jaw. His hair, pure white, is neatly parted) widely sitting cross-legged in a haughty manner before a large, low-level table, fills his cup to the brim with sake, drinks, and repeats. ...At his side, three or four lower rank geisha, a mix of young and old, attend to him.

...The time continues from Act 3 uninterrupted, however the glow from the electric lights is already a brilliant shine and it has already completely become the world of the night.

...As the lights go up on the stage, Rihei laughs in a loud, thunderous voice—who knows what is so funny? The others in the party also join in the laughter. Everyone has another round of sake.

...Kaede enters accompanied by Otsune. The other geishas yield the seat directly next to Rihei to her.

Rihei: Oh, you've come! ...You've finally come, my good general. ...you're late, you're late! ...Your honor, maybe? *(He laughs)*

Kaede: ...*(Silent, she sits at his side)*

Rihei: How about a bit to drink? ...Or so I'd like to say, but no matter where you go, you don't really make much of a drinking partner. ...Isn't that right?

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Kaede: No, I'll have some.

Rihei: What? You say you'll drink?

Kaede: Yes.

Rihei: That's excellent! ...Well, first of all, have a cup...*(He empties the cup at his side and offers it to Kaede)*

...A geisha nearby serves her.

Kaede: Cheers. *(She drinks it all in one breath)*

Rihei: One more...

Kaede: ...*(Silent, she is served once more)*

Rihei: Superb. ...It's now time to advance to the familiar third cup, but at that skill, there's no need for me to force you to swig it down in such a hurry. Let's go on at our leisure...

Geisha 1: My, Oiran, when did you become such a good drinker?

Otsune: It's true! When did you get so good, Oiran? ...Just up until the other day, you had been saying that the mere sight of sake made you feel ill...

Rihei: Really? Is that the case? ...If so, to begin with, you and I need to be more informal with each other.

Kaede: I wonder if my act of naiveté has been found out. *(She gives a melancholy smile)*

Rihei: First off, why don't I have you return that cup to me.

Kaede: Oh, I'm sorry, being so careless...*(She moves the cup to the wine basin ready to rinse it)*

Rihei: Oh now, just stop right there. ...I hate that, having the cup rinsed each and every time...

Kaede: Then I won't rinse it. *(Returning the cup as is, she pours sake to him)*

Geisha 1: Now, sir, let's hear something. *(She takes up a shamisen)*

Rihei: What are you saying now? There's no reason to hear this idiotic voice.

Geisha 2: Oh, but sir, that's not what you promised before.

Rihei: When and what have I promised?

Otsune: But you did, sir. You said that if Oiran were to appear, you would let us hear anything we liked...*(Then turning to Kaede)* He has quite the voice, you know...

Rihei: What the hell are you talking about? Nice voice; that's a shocker! *(He laughs again in a grand voice)* Instead of singing, let's drink! ...Tonight, I'd like to drink with her, tête-à-tête. ...Right, Oiran?...*(He takes up his cup and urges her to serve him)* But really, you're determined to be reserved to the end, aren't you? ...You...what was your name again?

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Otsune: Oh my, do you mean you've forgotten?

Rihei: I've forgotten.

Otsune: That won't do at all. You've got a duty to remember, you know. ...Right, Oiran?...

Kaede: *(Smiling, she does not answer)*

Rihei: Hold on, hold on, it's coming to me. ...Pour me another...*(He is served and takes a sip)* Yes, that's right...*(He places the cup down squarely on the table)*

Otsune: Have you remembered?

Rihei: I've remembered. ...It's not that I forgot; it's that I left last time without asking her name...

Geisha 1: Oh that's terrible. What kind of punch line is that?

...Everyone aside from Kaede unintentionally laughs.

Geisha 1: *(Continuing)* She's named Kaede. All right? Because if you should forget next time, it won't be Kaede, but us you'll have to deal with...

Geisha 2: It's because you're such a womanizer here and there...

Rihei: Even old and bald, my affairs don't stop, huh? *(Laughing)* But to those who make a living the way we do, that's the height living; the flower of our life, you know. Once we grow old, it's all over and business is doomed. ...It's Kaede, right? *(As if reminding himself)* Kaede, Kaede. ...Next time, I'll be fine. I won't forget. *(He starts to laugh, and then all of a sudden as if he had just remembered something, he looks closely at her, studying her face)* I see. The Kaede that they talked about was you?

Kaede: I'm sorry? *(Without thinking, she looks Rihei straight in the face)*

Rihei: It appeared in the papers at some point...the news of the affair in which a man who had lost his head to a woman of the red-light district, and he drank poison and died...

...Kaede turns pale. ...At the same time, everyone in the room is taken aback and falls silent.

An interval passes.

Rihei: What's wrong, everyone?...Everybody's quiet all of the sudden...There's no reason to get so blue. ...The dead man's an idiot. Kaede's not at fault. ...That's how it was, Kaede. ...When it comes to business, it's eat or be eaten. It's the same for all of us. If you don't slog through all the way to the end, what's the point of going through hell and having waded through all the murky water in the first place? ...It's true. ...Your doll-like beauty isn't your only talent. ...Kaede, I like you. ...I'll be back again and let's keep seeing each other. *(He reaches for the sake bottle and pours himself a drink. ...Before long, he rests his elbows on the low table and closes his eyes with a look of satisfaction on his face)*

(P141)

An interval passes.

...Otsune quietly signals to the geishas with her eyes. ...The geishas quietly nod, get up one-by-one, and leave the room with Otsune. ...Only Kaede remains.

An interval passes.

Rihei: *(He opens his eyes suddenly and looks about the room)* Now what's this? Everyone's run off like sewer rats! You've got to keep your eyes on these people! *(He laughs)*

...Kaede stands abruptly.

Rihei: What? You're going to leave me as well?

Kaede: I'll go get a warm bottle of sake.

Rihei: In that case, water would be good. ...Let's take a little break from the sake...

Kaede: Then I'll bring water...

...Kaede goes to the next room, places a water pitcher and a glass on a tray, and brings it back.

Kaede: *(She fills the glass with water and places it in front of Rihei)* Here you are.

Rihei: Thank you. *(He looks at Kaede)* Now I see. You are absolutely beautiful in everything you do. It's true not just in one thing, but everything. That must have been what made that fellow fall head over heels in love with you—even to the point where it killed him.

Kaede: Sir...

Rihei: What's wrong? Why are you frowning like that all of a sudden?

Kaede: So you also think of me like that?

Rihei: Like what?

Kaede: That...that I'm a poisonous woman after all?

Rihei: A poisonous woman? ...What, are you still fussing over what they said about you in the papers? *(He laughs)* But calling yourself something makes it all the more certain, you know.

Kaede: I suppose so. *(She quickly looks away)*

Rihei: But in Kinokuniya's kabuki plays like "Uwabami Oyû" and "Dakki no Ohyaku", the women never say that they're vamps. *(He laughs and looks into her eyes)* It's people who arbitrarily called them that after the fact. It had nothing to do with them. What the matter? Are you crying?

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Kaede: ...*(She silently bites on the edge of her sleeve)*

Rihei: Are you sad? Or frustrated?

Kaede: You know why.

Rihei: I haven't the slightest. What is it that's tormenting you?

Kaede: It's not so terrible as "tormenting".

Rihei: Then what is it? Just say it. You're getting choked up because you don't just say it.

Kaede: Do you plan on coming to see me again after tonight?

Rihei: They say customers who say they'll come again never do, you know.

Kaede: So are you saying that you will run away as well?

Rihei: You really don't know how to drink if your mind is already running ahead and thinking of things like that.

Kaede: I'm not drunk when I say this. After that horrible ordeal, customers would fear me and forget about me. It's no exaggeration to say that not one customer actually ever came back to see me after that.

Rihei: That's what you're worried about? ...Don't worry about every little spineless coward in the world.

Kaede: But it's so frustrating when I think about it. ...You kindly said earlier that it wasn't my fault back then. The truth is I don't think I was the only one to blame for what happened. *(She begins to cry)*

Rihei: I understand, I understand. You should have said so earlier. But when your hair turns white and you get to be my age, nobody says mindless things like "Oh sure, I'll surely come, Oiran". At any rate, such promises are disgraceful. It probably gets cold here at the embankment, so...well, what I mean is, in my book, as long as we get along well, I won't just leave you in this sort of place forever.

Kaede: Pardon me?

Rihei: I'll even take you out of this place right now!

Kaede: But, I have parents to take care of.

Rihei: Well yes, I suppose you would.

Kaede: I also have a brother and a sister.

Rihei: I don't mind.

Kaede: I also have a child.

Rihei: Like the renowned courtesan Takao, huh? Well, I guess that's all right too.

Kaede: Sir...*(She begins to cry)*

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...Rihei laughs a great laugh and suddenly begins to softly sing the Kiyomoto style's "Kanda Festival": "The smart young men at the festival, so manly, so lively..."

He continues, "Though I know his unfaithful nature, I hear a voice inside me telling me to become his wife..."

Act 5

(P143)

The setting is in the back courtyard of a certain brothel. (The same as in Act 3)

...It happens to be the thirteenth night of the ninth lunar month in autumn five years after Act 3, and the moon is shining coldly. ...The second Oiran to take the Kaede name stands atop the breakwater watching the moon.

...A customer's performance of Ranchô in the Shinnai style can be heard coming from one of the main rooms.

An interval passes.

...The maid Otsune from the teahouse "Kiku-izumi" who had appeared in Act 3 and Act 4 comes out.

Otsune: *(She looks at the successor to the Kaede name)* Is that you, Oiran?

Kaede II: Yes? *(She looks back)* Oh, Otsune-san...

Otsune: From over there, I was thinking that it must be you, and so it is!

Kaede II: Such a beautiful moon is out tonight, so... *(She looks back to the moon again)*

Otsune: Well, the weather on the fifteenth night of the eighth lunar month was so severe and all. ...It's rare for the moon to be this beautiful on the thirteenth night of the ninth month.

Kaede II: Oh, you mean tonight is the thirteenth night?

Otsune: Yes, it is. In olden times, they used to call it the "chestnut moon" or the "bean moon"...

Kaede: Until now, I've never thought of the moon as something that could move me so deeply. ...I've learned many things about myself that I never knew before I came here...Above all, until I came last year, I never would have thought that I would come to enjoy coming out alone to such a place to look out at the sea. *(She laughs)*

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Otsune: The first Kaede-san Oiran also liked it and would look out to the sea from atop the embankment very often.

Kaede II: I've heard that the first Kaede-san was a clever and capable person. ...Even now, they often speak about her inside.

Otsune: To me, rather than clever, she was a kind, honest, and good-natured Oiran.

Kaede II: Where is she now?

Otsune: She was bought out by a certain person from Komeyamachi about five years ago. I hear she now runs a small machi-ai establishment in Tsukiji and is extremely happy.

...At this time, four or five geishas come out noisily.

Geisha 1: They're still not here, Otsune-san?

Otsune: I received a phone call saying they were leaving Eitai over thirty minutes ago, so I think they'll be here any minute.

Geisha 2: *(She comes up the embankment)* Oh, over there on that boat. They're here.

...With that, there are those who come up the embankment and those who proceed down to the pier. ...During this time, Kaede II disappears before anyone notices.

An interval passes.

...The boat arrives and two customers come up alongside the geisha who came to greet them.

"Welcome! Welcome! It's been a while!" The geishas each greet the guests.

Customer 1: *(He waves his hand about)* Be quiet! Be quiet already! You're ruining the experience of having come by boat quietly watching the moon with such boorish screeching!

Customer 2: More importantly, get me something to drink, quick! ...You put me on that damn boat on some whim. I was shaking the whole way! *(He goes off ahead alone and is escorted away by the geishas)*

...Only Customer 1 and Otsune remain.

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Customer 1: What can you do? He's just that kind of an unrefined guy. Even though someone kindly allows him to view the moon from the river! *(After speaking, he realizes something and looks about the area)* What's this? Where could she be?

Otsune: Is there still another guest coming?

Customer 1: That's right, a guest. One who'll surely surprise you at that.

Otsune: Whoever could it be? ...A stranger?

Customer 1: No, not really a stranger. *(He starts back towards the pier)* What's taking you so long? Now hurry up! Hurry on up here!

...Onami comes up from the boat. ...Her hair done in the style of a married woman, she has already become the spitting image of the proprietress of an establishment.

Otsune: *(She suddenly sees Onami)* Oh my, Kaede... *(Unintentionally speaking, she is flustered and chokes up)*

Onami: Otsune-san...

Customer 1: *(To Otsune)* How about it? You were surprised, right?

Otsune: But I can't believe that you... *(After answering his question, she starts over)* It has been ages.

Onami: It certainly has...

Otsune: You haven't changed a bit...

Onami: Neither have you...

...The two stand opposite each other. They are silent for a brief period. ...Onami suddenly looks away and raising a handkerchief to her eyes. ...At the same time, Otsune blinks her eyes, struggling to hold back the tears.

Customer 1: Now, let's go! Let's go! Let's step inside! *(He urges her, starting off ahead)*

Onami: Sir, please wait a moment...

Customer 1: Huh? *(He looks back)*

Onami: I'm sorry, but please go on ahead...

Customer 1: Why?

Onami: It's hopeless after all. Just one look at Otsune-san and I can't stop crying. I'll need a few moments to collect myself. Otherwise, I won't be fit to be seen at a party...

Customer 1: Well I guess that's only to be expected. For you, everything you see and hear brings back countless memories.

Onami: That's exactly right. ...So please...

Customer 1: Well then, talk about old times with Otsune for a bit and then come on in after you've had the chance to settle down.

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Onami: I'll do that. ...I'm sorry for saying such selfish things...

Customer 1: Then I'll go on ahead.

...Customer 1 leaves.

An interval passes.

Onami: But is it really all right inside without you, Otsune-san?

Otsune: It's fine. The geishas have already gathered, so it's all right for a little while. ...I wonder if you remember Miyokichi-san?

Onami: Yes! Yes! Of course I remember! She was so skilled at Kiyomoto ballads. ...That obstinate Kamigô who never compliments anyone said... (*Becoming a little embarrassed*) He would only ever acknowledge and doff his hat to Miyokichi-san's shamisen.

Otsune: That Miyokichi-san is taking care of things for me, so it's all right if I'm not there...

Onami: Oh my! You mean Miyokichi-san is still at it?

Otsune: Yes. Yes. Last year we celebrated her sixtieth birthday, however she shows no such signs of weakening whatsoever...

Onami: Oh my. ...I thought that she probably had retired long ago. If not, she would already be...

Otsune: You will surely be surprised when you see her later! She is so lively and all...

Onami: I will definitely have to bring Kamigô again.

Otsune: Is Kamigô-san as well as ever?

Onami: Yes, thank you. As usual, he's always so busy... (*She gives a lonely smile*) More importantly, I want to ask about Omatsu. ...How is she doing?

Otsune: Omatsu-san has passed away.

Onami: What? (*Surprised*) She passed away?

Otsune: Not long after you left...I think it was. It was her heart...

Onami: And to think how strong she was! ...(*She becomes still*) I caused her so much trouble. ...We argued a lot...

Otsune: But Kaede-san, by what turn of events did you ever find your way back here tonight?

Onami: I was visiting the Fukagawa Fudô temple because the festival was today, the twenty-eighth day of the month. ...I was about to leave and go home. Normally, I would have gotten a rickshaw, but the weather was very nice. Somehow or other, I thought I might like to walk around a little. When I reached Eitai Bridge, I happened, quite unexpectedly, to run into the two gentlemen. They told me they were going to go to Susaki to view the moon and asked if I'd like to keep them company. I declined. I said I was ashamed of never having looked back even once since I retired and walked out of the great gate at the entrance to the Susaki pleasure district. But they said it was all right if I only went part of the way with them and asked me to come along on the boat. Having been asked by some of my regular customers, I couldn't very well say no. In the end, I came all the way out here with them...

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Otsune: So what did you think coming to this place after such a while?

Onami: Susaki seems so far away now.

Otsune: That's true. Our customers come a long way to get here...

Onami: How true. (*She feels a tightness in her chest*)

Otsune: Oh, that's right! (*As if suddenly remembering something*) Please wait for just a second... (*She leaves*)

An interval passes.

...Onami goes back up the embankment and stands looking out towards the sea as she had in former days. ...She is enveloped in the hum of the insects.

...Otsune comes back with the successor to the Kaede name.

Otsune: Kaede-san, this is the successor to your name, the second Kaede-san...*(She introduces them)*

Onami: Oh? *(She looks up)*

Kaede II: It is a pleasure.

Onami: My, you are... *(No more words follow. ...She quietly comes down the embankment)*

Otsune: Kaede-san, please say something to your successor. ...I'm going to go have a quick look inside... *(She leaves)*

An interval passes.

Onami: It's so quiet isn't it? There's not even the sound of a wave to break the stillness... But when it gets too quiet, it gets lonely, doesn't it?

Kaede II: I understand that when you were here before, you also enjoyed coming up the embankment and looking out at the sea.

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Onami: *(Laughing)* Did Otsune-san tell you that?

Kaede II: Yes. ...I also like it here and come often...

Onami: When I was still new here, I would stand atop this embankment looking at the sea, and I felt like I could see far off to the old familiar mountains and rivers of my home. My hometown is Okazaki in Sanshû, but anyway, from that point on, whenever I would feel lonely or blue, I would quietly slip out of my room and come here...

Kaede II: I am from Tokyo originally and I don't know what it means to have a hometown in the country. But when I come here, it lifts my spirits and thoughts from my childhood start coming back to me.

Onami: Oiran, how old are you?

Kaede II: I am nineteen.

Onami: I was eighteen when I came here. ...But, by then I already had a newborn baby.

Kaede II: My...

Onami: When I was seventeen, I was told it was for the sake of the family, and for the sake of the parents. I was obliged to become mistress to a man who we were indebted to. I bore his child, but the man soon died, and I made arrangements for someone to take the child and returned home alone only to learn to my great surprise that my father had been taken away by the police on suspicion of fraud. ...My father is descended from a samurai family and is really a good man. He isn't the kind of person who'd do such things. ...In other words, he was deceived, and in due time the matter went to trial. He was acquitted, but by then our financial situation had gone from bad to worse. After the trial and everything, we were left with a large pile of debts. ...And so, without thinking, I said; "Mother, I'll sell my body or do whatever if there's anything I can do." ...What a fool I was...Oh, heavens! What's gotten in to me? We've only just met and I'm telling you with my boring life story...(she smiles)

Kaede II: No, it's not boring in the least. Tell me more. ...I also came here after having been told it was for my parents' sake. I'm the daughter of a poor carpenter who lives from day to day. ...I told Otsune-san a little while ago, but girls like me are so innocent. They don't know a thing about the world before they're sold and they come to this place. I didn't even know what "to honor your parents" meant before I came here. ...But I knew I didn't like being desperately poor like my family. I was told that if I were to come here, I could wear nice clothes, live in comfort, and eat whatever I liked. I was in a trance...Completely absorbed in all these promises, I was led off to this place. I didn't even know how much money I was being sold for.

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Onami: (*Suddenly*) Oiran, is there a customer whom you like?

Kaede II: No, there isn't anyone like that. ...Of course, even for a girl like me, there have been some who have gotten serious and said nice things to me. Believe it or not, there was even one who begged me to commit lovers' suicide with him. ...But the more serious they become, the more I lose interest. No matter what nice things they say, I start to wonder what on Earth they were talking about. ...I wonder if I was always this cold-hearted from the start.

Onami: I don't think it could only be called cold-hearted. Anyway, what can you expect of those who come to this kind of decadent place? I think it's only natural for you

to draw a line somewhere in your heart and tell yourself you can only go so far. Oiran, I haven't ever fallen for anyone either. Not even once. ...When I think about it, as a woman, it's such a lonely story...

Kaede II: But now you're happy, aren't you?

Onami: Hmm...I wonder. *(She gives a lonely smile)* Even now, I'm still indebted to the person who bought my freedom, but he allows me to keep a shop in Tsukiji, even though it isn't much of a place. I suppose I'm doing all right. ...Business is prospering. ...But I still have parents over seventy, a sister of marriageable age, and a ten-year-old child to take care of. I can't relax just yet. After I see my parents through the last of their days, and I find a husband for my sister, and I'm finally alone with my child, I wonder if I won't find happiness then. ...And then, I'll get out of the machi-ai business and do something more reputable. A tobacco shop or a household goods store...I think I'd like to run an honest business like that. ...That's my lifelong wish...

...At this time, a lively "sawagi" song with shamisen and drum interspersed can be heard from inside the building. Otsune comes appears in a hurry.

Otsune: Kaede-san, they're all waiting for you. Right this way...

Onami: Otsune-san, I've decided against it. ...I think I'll be going home after all...

Otsune: But your companions...

Onami: If you could take care of things somehow. ...From the beginning, I only promised to see them this far. ...That's why I had the boat wait.

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Otsune: Are you sure?

Onami: There's simply no way I could enter into that commotion.

Kaede II: How true! I'd feel sorry for her. ...Let her be on her way, Otsune-san...

...With this, the stage revolves.

...The scene changes to the boat on the river.

...Onami is seen off by Otsune. She gets on the boat. ...The boatman takes off promptly.

...Kaede's successor appears on top of the embankment.

Kaede II: Farewell. (*She waves*)

Onami: Farewell. (*Responding in kind, she waves back*)

...The boat sails quietly under the moon towards the hanamichi.

(Curtain Descends)